

CHARLESTON

FIRE DEPARTMENT



Fire Damages Woodbridge Apartments

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Charleston, SC (January 21, 2014): On 1/21/2014 an off-duty Berkeley County Sheriff's Deputy was departing for work when he observed a fire at the Woodbridge Apartment Complex. He proceeded to notify emergency services and initiated the evacuation of the building. Units from the Charleston, St. Andrews, and North Charleston Fire Departments, Charleston County EMS, and Charleston Police Department were dispatched to the reported apartment fire at 4:36 AM. First arriving fire department units arrived at 4:39 AM and discovered a fire extending to the roof area of the 20 unit structure. A second alarm was requested due to the extent of the fire involvement and an initial report of a trapped occupant.

Fire department personnel started a search of the apartments and initiated an interior attack on the fire. Due to the extent of fire growth and partial roof collapse, firefighters evacuated the building and initiated a defensive attack. Fire damaged the roof area of 12 apartments of the 20 unit structure. Several other apartments suffered water damage from fire extinguishment. The fire was brought under control at approximately 5:30 AM.

Fire Department personnel and Woodbridge Apartment Management were able to account for all occupants. No injuries were reported during the fire and the occupant that was first reported missing was later located unharmed. Red Cross was notified and arrived on scene to assist approximately 35 displaced residents.

The Charleston Fire Department Fire Marshal Division responded to investigate the fire. Based upon the scene examination and witness statements the fire was determined to have originated on a second floor balcony. The fire spread upward on the exterior of the building and into the eaves and the attic space. The specific cause of the fire is still under investigation.

The apartment was equipped with a residential fire sprinkler system, smoke alarms within the unit, and a building fire alarm system. The residential fire sprinkler system does not provide sprinkler coverage in the attic or on the balconies. These systems are designed and intended to increase the amount of time afforded to the occupants to escape the building. As this fire spread upward, the fire advancement into the occupied areas of the apartments was halted due to the activation and protection offered by the fire sprinkler and provided critical time for occupants to escape.

As a reminder citizens are encouraged to plan, prepare, and practice an escape plan for any type of residence in the event of a fire.

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